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Neuroticism and Agreeableness as Predictors of Marital Readiness Among Adolescents Applying for Marriage Dispensation

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia ranks eighth globally in child marriage cases, with Malang Regency being one of the regions with the highest number of marriage dispensation applications. Adolescent applicants for marriage dispensation generally have not demonstrated adequate marital readiness. Marital readiness may be influenced by personality traits, particularly neuroticism and agreeableness. This study aimed to examine the effects of neuroticism and agreeableness on marital readiness. The study employed a quantitative correlational approach using simple linear regression analysis. The instruments consisted of a neuroticism scale (12 items, adapted from the NEO-FFI), an agreeableness scale (10 items, adapted from the IPIP), and a marital readiness scale (36 items). Participants were 72 adolescents aged 13 to 19 years registered as marriage dispensation applicants at the Religious Court of Region X, selected using non-probability sampling. The results showed that agreeableness had a significant effect on marital readiness, with a coefficient of determination of 0.101 and $p = 0.006$ ($p < 0.05$). Neuroticism also had a significant but low effect on marital readiness, with $p = 0.039$ ($p < 0.05$).

Keywords: *Agreeableness, Marriage Dispensation, Personality, Readiness For Marriage, Neuroticism, Child Marriage*

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INTRODUCTION

According to UNICEF data (2023), Indonesia ranked eighth globally, with 1,459,000 recorded cases of child marriage. Indonesia also ranked second among ASEAN countries in terms of the highest number of early marriage cases. Femmy Eka, Deputy for Coordination of Improving the Quality of Children, Women, and Youth at the Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs, stated that East Java has the highest rate of child marriage, which is 44% higher than the national average. East Java also recorded the highest number of child marriage dispensation applications in Indonesia, totaling 15,337 cases, equivalent to 29.4% of the national total (Wahyu, 2023). According to data from the Religious Court of X Regency, 985 cases were handled in 2023, followed by 968 marriage dispensation cases in 2024. Applicants for marriage dispensation, particularly in X Regency,

are generally adolescents aged 14 to 18 years, both male and female, as recorded in marriage dispensation applications (Ending, 2022).

During adolescence, social behavior patterns and personality traits begin to develop and tend to become relatively stable through interactions with others. Adolescents who demonstrate cooperative attitudes, concern for others' feelings, empathy, and conflict avoidance tend to establish more supportive relationships with peers and family members. The development of these characteristics is influenced by family environments and sociocultural conditions through interaction patterns, emotional support, and instilled values (Menardo et al., 2017). Personality patterns developed during adolescence may also be associated with individual behavior and decision-making in adulthood (Franken & Prinzie, 2025). Therefore, couples who marry during adolescence may face various risks, both in terms of physical health and psychological well-being. In terms of health, pregnancy and childbirth during adolescence may increase the risks of miscarriage and maternal and infant mortality due to the reproductive system not being fully mature (UNICEF, 2005). Furthermore, adolescents who marry at an early age generally have not yet achieved sufficient maturity in their thinking and behavior (Anwar & Rahmah, 2016; Nurjananto & Partini, 2020). Emotional instability may also affect adolescents' ability to consider the consequences of decisions, regulate emotions, and resolve conflicts effectively (Hasmarlin & Hirmaningsih, 2019; Hurlock, 1999; Putri & Shofia, 2021).

Marital readiness refers to the assumption of responsibilities and challenges within marriage, as defined by Larson (as cited in Badger et al., 2009). It also refers to a condition in which individuals feel prepared and willing to enter an intimate marital relationship, assume responsibilities as a husband or wife, and raise children. This readiness serves as an important foundation for couples in navigating their future married lives (Nurainun & Yusuf, 2022). Personality can be one of the key factors contributing to marital readiness and is an important aspect to consider before individuals enter married life (Itryah & Ananda, 2023). Characteristics such as emotional stability, conflict management skills, commitment, and adaptability are necessary to establish a strong marital foundation (Abdilla, 2024). One personality trait that may hinder marital readiness is neuroticism. Individuals with high levels of neuroticism tend to have lower emotional stability, experience anxiety more easily, and have difficulties managing stress and conflict, which may affect their readiness to enter married life (McCrae & Costa, 2008). Conversely, agreeableness reflects an individual's tendency to be empathetic, cooperative, and friendly in interpersonal relationships. Individuals with high levels of agreeableness tend to compromise more easily, avoid conflict, and value relationship harmony, which may contribute to marital satisfaction (Elawati et al., 2026).

Age plays an important role in marriage-related factors, as individuals who marry during adolescence tend to experience greater difficulties in establishing harmonious households compared to those who marry at a more mature age (Arnett, 2015). This is particularly evident among women who decide to marry at an early age, as they may have limited emotional control, parenting skills, and preparedness in facing the realities of marital life (Nainggolan, 2017). Research by Putri and Pertiwi (2024) indicates that

emotional maturity is strongly correlated with marital readiness, particularly among marriage dispensation applicants. Individuals with unstable emotions tend to demonstrate lower levels of marital readiness. In another study, Pertiwi, Inas, and Putri (2024) revealed that most marriage dispensation applicants were not fully psychologically and socially prepared for marriage, despite having obtained legal authorization. This finding is consistent with Putri (2018), who stated that individuals who decide to marry during adolescence tend to exhibit emotional instability. Consequently, adolescents who marry at an early age are more vulnerable to stress.

Adolescence is often referred to as a period of storm and stress because individuals experience various complex emotional, social, and psychological changes (Wrycza & Susilawati, 2024). During this period, adolescents may experience nervousness, tension, and a tendency to overthink when facing stressful situations. These conditions are associated with anxiety tendencies and difficulties in emotional regulation, which may affect individuals' ability to adapt to their environments (Chrisnatalia & Ashariyati, 2024). One psychological factor associated with marital adjustment is personality, particularly the Big Five Personality traits (Latifah & Wahyuni, 2019). The five dimensions of the Big Five Personality include extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Personality is also known to influence marital adjustment in both men and women (Boucard et al., 1999).

One personality trait that potentially hinders marital readiness is neuroticism. Individuals with high levels of neuroticism tend to experience negative emotions, such as emotional instability, anxiety, anger, and depression, as well as difficulties regulating negative emotions when facing problems or interacting with others (McCrae & Costa, 2003; Azalea & Noerfitri, 2023). These individuals also tend to be less adaptive in responding to stress, perceive everyday situations as threatening, and react excessively to minor frustrations (Widiger & Oltmanns, 2017). Neuroticism encompasses several main aspects, including anxiety, characterized by excessive fear and worry; depression, associated with persistent feelings of sadness and difficulties maintaining positive thoughts; and emotional volatility, characterized by rapid mood changes, irritability, and a tendency to become easily offended (Soto & John, 2017). Furthermore, individuals with high levels of neuroticism tend to have poor emotional control and difficulties trusting others (Purna & Prawitasari, 2019; Wijaya et al., 2020). These characteristics may hinder marital readiness because married life requires the ability to regulate emotions, build trust, resolve conflicts, and adaptively cope with various life demands.

On the other hand, agreeableness reflects an individual's tendency to be prosocial, altruistic, empathetic, cooperative, friendly, and tolerant toward others (McCrae & Costa, 2003; Cervone & Pervin, 2013). This dimension encompasses trust, friendliness, concern for others' interests, cooperativeness, and a willingness to help (Struss & Cieciuch, 2014). Individuals with high levels of agreeableness tend to demonstrate kindness, forgiveness, empathy, gentleness, and a preference for harmonious relationships. Conversely, individuals with low levels of agreeableness tend to be cynical, rude, suspicious, uncooperative, easily offended, and manipulative (Sabira & Kustanti, 2022). These

characteristics are associated with social adaptability because individuals with higher levels of agreeableness are more capable of establishing positive relationships and adjusting to their social environments (John & Robins, 2021). Agreeable individuals also tend to be affectionate, kind, cooperative, and conflict-avoidant, whereas individuals with low levels of agreeableness tend to be stubborn, suspicious, arrogant, and competitive (McCrae & Costa, 2003). Nevertheless, an excessive tendency to prioritize others' interests may lead individuals to neglect their personal priorities in certain situations (Kurnia & Rinaldi, 2024). Therefore, neuroticism and agreeableness are relevant personality traits to examine in relation to marital readiness among adolescents applying for marriage dispensation.

Although several studies have examined the relationship between personality and marital readiness, very few have specifically investigated the effects of the two personality traits, neuroticism and agreeableness, among adolescents applying for marriage dispensation, particularly in regions with high marriage dispensation rates, such as X Regency. This represents a research gap that needs to be addressed to provide a deeper understanding of marital readiness within the context of child marriage.

The research question in this study is whether neuroticism and agreeableness influence marital readiness among adolescents whose parents have applied for marriage dispensation. This study aims to examine the effects of the personality traits neuroticism and agreeableness on marital readiness among adolescents applying for marriage dispensation at the Religious Court. The theoretical and practical contributions of this study are expected to include expanding knowledge, particularly in the field of clinical psychology, and deepening the understanding of the influence of personality on marital readiness. Furthermore, the findings may serve as a foundation for psychological interventions, such as premarital counseling and psychoeducation, as well as provide considerations for policies concerning the prevention and management of child marriage. Therefore, the hypothesis of this study is that neuroticism and agreeableness have an effect on marital readiness among adolescents applying for marriage dispensation at the Religious Court of X Regency.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design. According to Sugiyono (2016), correlational research is characterized by examining the relationships between two or more variables. This type of research focuses on determining the degree of influence through the analysis of data collected by the researcher throughout the research process. The data were intended to identify the effect of neuroticism on marital readiness among couples involved in marriage dispensation cases at the Religious Court of X Regency, obtained through questionnaire responses.

Research Participants

This study employed a non-probability sampling technique, specifically total sampling, in which the entire population was included as the research sample. The population consisted of adolescents involved in marriage dispensation cases at the Religious

Court of X Regency, aged 14 to 18 years, whose parents had submitted marriage dispensation applications during the period from January 15 to February 26.

Table 1. Demographic Data of Subjects

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	16	22%
Female	56	78%
Age		
14	2	3%
15	2	3%
16	12	17%
17	30	42%
18	26	36%
Highest Education Completed		
Primary School	28	39%
Junior High School	37	51%
Senior High School	7	10%
Occupation		
Unemployed	31	43%
Private-Sector Employee	9	13%
Trader	10	14%
Laborer	12	17%
Farmer	2	3%
Shop Employee	3	4%
Tailor	1	1%
Livestock Farmer	1	1%
Casual Worker	1	1%
Construction Worker	2	3%
TOTAL	**72**	**100%**

Research Variables and Instruments

The variables used in this study consisted of independent variables, namely neuroticism and agreeableness, and a dependent variable, namely marital readiness among adolescents whose parents had applied for marriage dispensation at the Religious Court of X Regency. Data were collected using measurement instruments in the form of Likert scales. According to Sugiyono (2014), a Likert scale is a measurement scale used to assess individuals' attitudes, opinions, and perceptions toward a particular object. In this study, the marital readiness scale was adopted from the scale developed by Wulandari (2020), consisting of 36 items with four response options: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The scale was developed based on Wiryasti's (2014) concept of marital readiness, which adapted Carroll et al.'s (2009) theory of marital readiness.

The instrument used to measure neuroticism was adopted from Bianca (2012), which was adapted from the NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI), a short form of the instrument developed by Costa and McCrae (1992). The neuroticism scale consisted of 12 statement items referring to two sub-aspects, comprising six favorable items and six unfavorable items. The scoring system for favorable items was as follows: 5 for "Very Descriptive of Me," 4 for "Descriptive of Me," 3 for "Neutral," 2 for "Not Descriptive of Me,"

and 1 for "Not at All Descriptive of Me." Meanwhile, unfavorable items were scored in reverse (reverse scoring). The neuroticism scale had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.836, indicating that the instrument was reliable.

The third instrument used in this study was the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP), which was developed based on the personality theory of Costa and McCrae. This instrument employed a five-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating a stronger level of agreement. The five response options were Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Somewhat Agree (SA), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA). Based on the validity test, a value of p = 0.09 was obtained, indicating that the scale was considered valid for use. Furthermore, based on the table presented above, the marital readiness variable had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.862.

Research Procedure and Data Analysis

This study consisted of three stages: preparation, implementation, and data analysis. During the preparation stage, the researcher identified the research problem, selected the measurement instruments, and prepared informed consent forms in accordance with research ethics principles. During the implementation stage, respondents were provided with information regarding the research objectives, data confidentiality, and their right to refuse or withdraw from participation without any consequences. After providing informed consent, respondents independently completed the Neuroticism Scale and the Marital Readiness Scale. Data collection was conducted from January 15 to February 26, 2025, at the Religious Court of X Regency. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using simple linear regression to examine the effect of neuroticism on marital readiness. Throughout the research process, all procedures adhered to the ethical principles of voluntary participation, confidentiality, participant autonomy, and the minimization of physical and psychological risks to respondents.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

RESEARCH RESULT

The following are the results of the study on neuroticism and marital readiness among adolescents involved in marriage dispensation applications, aged 14 to 18 years. Following data collection through questionnaire distribution, a total of 72 respondents were recruited. The data were then processed and analyzed. The following section presents a description of the results for the neuroticism and marital readiness variables.

Table 2. Normality Test for Neuroticism

Measure	Unstandardized Residual
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.200

The normality test was conducted to determine whether the residual values were normally distributed. The test was performed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov technique. Based on the normality test results, the significance value was 0.200 > 0.05; therefore, it can be concluded that the residual values were normally distributed.

Table 3. Normality Test for Agreeableness

Variable	Shapiro–Wilk p
Agreeableness	0.203

Based on the table above, the p-value for the agreeableness scale was 0.205, which is greater than 0.05, the standard threshold for data normality. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data on the agreeableness scale were normally distributed, and H0 can be accepted.

Table 4. Results of Variable Categorization Analysis

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Neuroticism	High	58	81%
	Low	14	19%
Agreeableness	High	37	51%
	Low	35	49%
Marital Readiness	High	8	11%
	Low	64	89%

Based on Table 3, the total number of respondents in this study was 72. For the neuroticism variable, 58 respondents, or 81%, were in the high category, while 14 respondents, or 19%, were in the low category. These results indicate that most respondents had high levels of neuroticism.

For the agreeableness variable, 37 respondents, or 51%, were in the high category, while 35 respondents, or 49%, were in the low category. These results indicate that the respondents' levels of agreeableness were relatively balanced, although the number of respondents in the high category was slightly greater than that in the low category.

Furthermore, for the marital readiness variable, 8 respondents, or 11%, were in the high category, while 64 respondents, or 89%, were in the low category. Thus, it can be concluded that most adolescents involved in marriage dispensation applications in this study had low levels of marital readiness.

Table 5. Simple Linear Regression of Neuroticism

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	738.353	1	738.353	4.443	0.039
Residual	11633.647	70	166.195		
Total	12372.000	71			

The F value was 4.443, with a significance level of 0.039 < 0.05. Therefore, the regression model can be used to predict the participant variable. In other words, neuroticism (X1) has an effect on marital readiness (Y), although the effect is relatively weak.

Table 6. Simple Linear Regression of Agreeableness

Model	R	R^2	p
Overall Model Test	0.318	0.101	0.006

Based on the table above, Model 1 indicates that agreeableness affects marital readiness. This can be seen from the R-square value of 0.101, which means that agreeableness explains 10.1% of the variance in marital readiness. The table also shows a p-value of 0.006, which is lower than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that agreeableness has a significant effect on marital readiness.

DISCUSSION

Based on the research findings, the first hypothesis (H1), which states that the personality trait of *neuroticism* influences marital readiness among adolescents whose parents have applied for marriage dispensation, was accepted. The *neuroticism* trait accounted for 6% of the variance in marital readiness, indicating a relatively low contribution, with a significance value of 0.039 < 0.05. This suggests that higher levels of *neuroticism* may affect marital readiness through emotional instability, anxiety, and difficulties in managing stress.

The second hypothesis (H2), which states that the personality trait of *agreeableness* influences marital readiness among adolescents whose parents have applied for marriage dispensation, was also accepted. *Agreeableness* had a significant effect on marital readiness, although its contribution was relatively low. Individuals with high levels of *agreeableness* tend to be more cooperative, empathetic, capable of compromising, and better able to establish harmonious relationships. The relatively low contributions of both variables indicate that marital readiness is also influenced by other factors, such as educational attainment, economic conditions, family environment, social pressure, emotional maturity, and life experiences. Some respondents also had low levels of education, which made it difficult for them to understand several questionnaire items. Furthermore, family or environmental pressure to marry may influence both their decisions to marry and their responses when completing the questionnaire.

Agreeableness describes an individual's tendency to be cooperative, empathetic, friendly, and considerate of others' interests. These characteristics may support marital readiness because individuals are better able to build harmonious relationships, compromise, and avoid conflicts in married life. However, the relatively low contribution of *agreeableness* indicates that being cooperative and empathetic alone is insufficient to ensure that adolescents are ready for marriage. Individuals also need to possess emotional maturity, economic readiness, knowledge of the roles of a husband or wife, and the ability to make independent decisions. On the other hand, *neuroticism* is associated with an individual's tendency to experience negative emotions, such as anxiety, tension, anger, and emotional instability. Individuals with high levels of *neuroticism* tend to have greater difficulty managing stress, dealing with conflicts, and adapting to the demands of married life.

Based on counseling observations conducted during the research process, some prospective couples were reported to tend to remain silent, become easily angered, or display intense emotional reactions when facing problems. These conditions indicate that

emotional stability is an important aspect of marital readiness, as marriage requires the ability to manage emotions, resolve conflicts, and adapt to changes effectively.

The relatively low contributions of both personality traits to marital readiness may be influenced by other factors, such as age, education, socioeconomic conditions, family environment, and understanding of married life. Most adolescents whose parents applied for marriage dispensation were still within the adolescent age range and had completed only elementary or junior high school. Low educational attainment may limit individuals' understanding of household responsibilities, reproductive health, child-rearing, and the consequences of early marriage. This is consistent with Adam (2019), who stated that adolescents with lower levels of education are at a higher risk of marrying at an early age.

In addition to education, economic conditions may also influence marital readiness. Some adolescents whose parents applied for marriage dispensation did not yet have permanent employment and remained financially dependent on their parents. However, marital readiness is not merely related to the ability to hold a wedding ceremony or having a partner; it also involves physical, emotional, social, and economic readiness to navigate married life (Duvall & Miller, 1985). Family and social environmental factors may also influence adolescents' decisions to marry, for example, family pressure, concerns about social judgment, long-term romantic relationships, or premarital pregnancy. Adolescence is a transitional period characterized by identity exploration, emotional instability, and vulnerability to environmental influences (Hurlock, 1980). Therefore, adolescents applying for marriage dispensation may not necessarily possess adequate psychological readiness for marriage. Marital readiness should encompass the ability to make a commitment, regulate emotions, establish healthy communication, fulfill family roles, and deal with various household problems in a mature manner.

This study has several strengths, as it focuses on adolescents whose parents have applied for marriage dispensation, a vulnerable group that has rarely been examined in psychological research. Collecting data directly within the context of marriage dispensation applications also provides a more realistic picture of adolescents' marital readiness in the field. However, this study has several limitations, including a relatively small sample size, limited data collection time, and research instruments that still need to be adjusted to adolescents' characteristics and levels of understanding. Furthermore, marital readiness is influenced by many factors beyond *agreeableness* and *neuroticism*. Therefore, future research could involve a larger sample and examine other factors, such as emotional maturity, family support, economic conditions, education, reproductive health knowledge, and readiness for parenthood.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the personality traits of *neuroticism* and *agreeableness* influence marital readiness among adolescents involved in marriage dispensation cases in Region X. The influence of *neuroticism* on marital readiness was relatively low, indicating that marital readiness is influenced not only by an individual's personality traits but also by other factors, such as family background, social pressure,

relationship experiences, economic readiness, and educational attainment. Similarly, *agreeableness* had an influence on marital readiness, although its contribution was relatively low. This indicates that being cooperative, empathetic, and capable of building harmonious relationships is not sufficient to ensure adolescents' readiness for married life.

Adolescents whose parents have applied for marriage dispensation tend not to be optimally prepared to enter married life. Some adolescents still perceive romantic relationships and marriage as similar, whereas marriage requires mental, physical, emotional, social, and economic readiness. Adolescents are also still in the stage of identity exploration; therefore, their abilities to regulate emotions, deal with conflicts, and make independent decisions may not yet be fully developed.

This study has several limitations, particularly the sample size of fewer than 100 participants due to limited access and data collection time. Furthermore, the use of questionnaires among some respondents with low educational attainment may have affected their understanding of the research items. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ additional methods, such as observation and interviews, to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the psychological conditions of adolescents and the reasons behind marriage dispensation applications. Future researchers are also encouraged to use simpler research instruments that are appropriate for the characteristics of adolescents whose parents have applied for marriage dispensation. Data collection should be planned with better time management, as participants are also required to attend counseling sessions at the Religious Court. In addition, future studies may explore other factors that potentially influence marital readiness, such as emotional maturity, family support, economic conditions, education, reproductive health knowledge, and readiness for parenthood.

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